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E LITTLE CLASSIC SERIES.

The Bluest of Blue Birds

A. FLANAGAN COMPANY

The Little Classic Series

no 2

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BLUEST OF BLUEBIRDS

ADAPTED BY

N. MOORE BANTA

1923

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BLUEST OF BLUE BIRDS

ONCE upon a time, when the world was new, and wishing was having, there lived a youth called Pablo. This youth was a bird-cage maker.

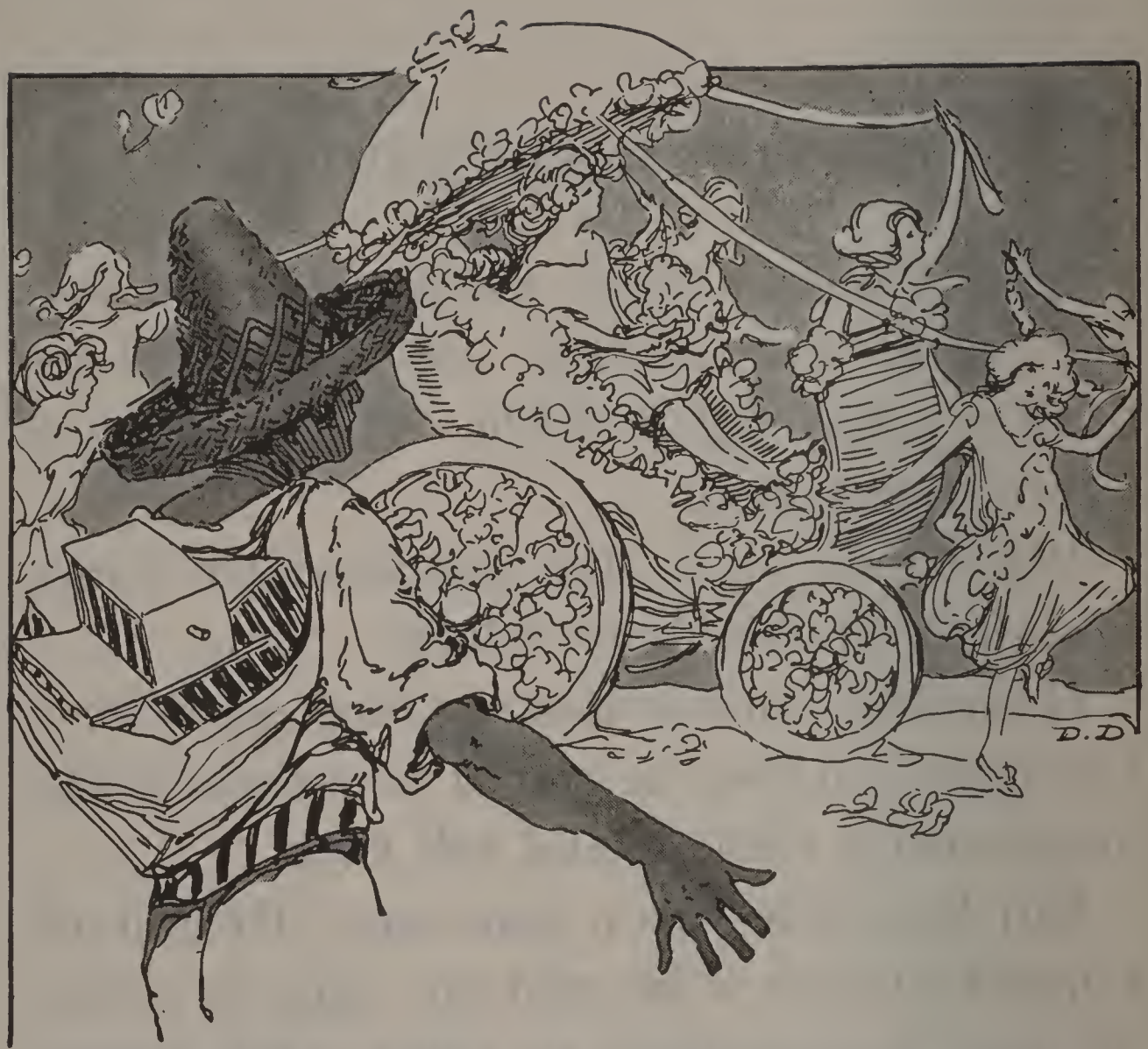
Pablo lived in a little tumble-down house in a little tumble-down village.

He would work at making bird-cages for a few days and then he would take them to the neighboring villages and sell them.

But his trade was a poor one. He judged himself in luck if he sold one cage in a day. As may be supposed, he knew what sorrow and poverty were.

One day as he was proceeding to a village he heard sounds of merry-making. He heard the buzz of many people, and the strains of a band of music.

This merry-making was a procession of children dressed in white. They were carry-



"This merry-making was a procession of children dressed in white"

ing in their midst a beautiful little girl crowned with roses. She was seated in a chariot covered with white satin and decorated with beautiful flowers and evergreens.

This procession of children was a May Party. The little girl crowned with roses

was the May Queen. They were celebrating May Day.

In front of the little chariot a number of children danced. They held in their hands tin platters for gifts of money. As may be imagined, all, or nearly all, the spectators dropped their coins into the platters.

Pablo moved away from them in a sad frame of mind, saying to himself as he walked on: "Is this the justice of the world? There they are flinging their money into these platters just because these children come in procession to announce to them that it is the month of May.

"They act as though they could not find out that it is May by looking in the almanac. They barter and grind me down to the lowest price for my cages, even when I chance to sell one."

Full of these bitter thoughts he walked on sadly. The voice of a very great enemy, hunger, was making itself heard within him.

He had nothing in his wallet but his clasp-

"He had noting in his wallet but his clasp-knife"

knife. He had had nought for his breakfast but hopes, and these made him sharp and active.

As he walked along with these bitter thoughts he saw a well-dressed man coming towards him. Pressed by hunger, Pablo, taking his hat off politely, approached the man and said: "Excuse me, sir, but could you give me a trifle? I promise I will return it as soon as I earn some money."

"Don't you think it is a shameful thing for a man like you, young and strong, to be begging of people? Does it not strike you that you have a duty to earn your living by working at your trade?"

"Yes, sir, certainly, but my trade does not

fulfil its own duty. Most people like to see the birds flying about free rather than in cages. Therefore, day by day, I find myself poorer than before."

At first the stranger doubted what he heard. The bird-cage maker, however, gave him a careful account of his work, and of the small profits he made. The stranger soon became interested and sympathized with his ill-fortune. Pablo was a man who always knew how to get other people interested in himself.

"Come, come," said the stranger, smiling, "I will do something for you. I cannot find buyers for your bird-cages, but I can help you in another way. I cannot give you money, but I will give you something that is more valuable. If you use this help I give you rightly you shall never more be in want."

The stranger then took out a fife and played a few notes clear and sweet, that sounded like the song of a bird.

Pablo saw flying before him a bird, blue as

the sky, which came and perched on one of his cages.

"See here," added the stranger, "is a gift that will make up for all your past misery. From this day forth you have only to wish for what you want. Then say slowly and clearly: 'Bluest of blue birds, do your duty!' and your wish will be granted to you. Take care, however, you do not wish for money. Anything else except money will be granted."

"By my faith!" cried Pablo, "but I will try it at once. For the last twenty years I have wished to have all I can eat. 'Bluest of blue birds, do your duty!'"

At once there was spread before him on the grass a breakfast fit for a prince. This delicious meal was served in beautiful dishes of silver and glass, all placed upon the whitest of cloths. Pablo was so surprised that he flung himself upon his knees before the stranger to thank him.

The stranger raised him up, saying: "I am the good helper of the honest working people

"He flung himself upon his knees to thank him"

of this country. Sit down and eat without fear. Make good use of your Lucky Star. Please remember, do not wish for money. If you want money you must work for it." Then the stranger disappeared as if he had sunk into the ground.

Pablo could not find words to express his thanks but he knelt down and kissed the place where the stranger had stood.

He then sat down and ate his breakfast. After his fine meal, he began to take note of his old suit of clothes. Said he, "I wish to have a better suit than these old well-worn working clothes. I wish also for a fine horse to ride." Lifting his staff up, he cried, "Bluest of blue birds, do your duty."

In an instant his old suit changed into one of richest velvet, trimmed in gold and silver. His rough staff changed into a splendid horse, saddled and bridled, and having round its neck a collar of silver bells.

Pablo was so surprised at what had happened that he could scarcely get his breath

for a few moments. Finally he fastened the cage with the blue bird to the saddle. He leaped on the horse and rode away. As he rode along he took time to look himself over. He was as proud of his new clothes as a donkey is of its ears.

He said to himself, "Now I will go forth in search of adventure. I don't think I shall need to work any more. True, I haven't any money. According to this gift I can get money only by working for it. Why should I have money? The bird will give me whatever I want. So I don't need any money."

But he could not get the matter of money out of his mind. The more he thought about it, the more he wanted money. He said to himself, "I am too high up in the world now to think about working. So I must manage to get money in some other way. I must hear the sound of coins jingling in my pockets."

His new horse was a fine one and traveled very fast. He soon reached the gates of a splendid castle. A feast was taking place

within. The guests were all seated under a shady bower.

They had been disappointed in the musicians who were to have played. The lord of the castle was very sorry that the musicians had disappointed them. Said he, "Music is the only thing lacking to make a perfect day."

Now this lord of the castle was an old miser. He paid the musicians so poorly that they did not wish to play for his parties. That is the reason they had not come.

"It is really too bad to be disappointed in this manner," said the lord of the castle. "Those musicians do not appreciate the large fees I have been giving them."

Pablo, on hearing this, advanced to the bower. He very politely bowed to the lord and lady of the castle.

Then in a most polite manner he said:

"If it be right for a simple knight to offer to assist such a noted company of rank and beauty, I think I can promise to provide

"Desired him to open the ball with his eldest daughter"

delightful and appropriate music for you."

"Oh, do at once, please!" cried all the ladies who were longing to dance.

"Bluest of blue birds, do your duty!" said Pablo.

Suddenly in the distance was heard the noise of many feet. A troop of musicians with their instruments soon appeared, to the great delight of the company.

The lord of the castle thanked the stranger warmly, and desired him to open the ball with his eldest daughter, a maiden fair and lovely, like a snow bird.

When the ball was at its height, Pablo ordered an elegant banquet to be served. During the banquet the bluest of blue birds sang beautiful songs, which were much admired by the company.

Games of chance followed, and Pablo, taking advantage of his good fortune, distributed among the ladies pearls, bracelets, and rings of precious stones. All those present were surprised beyond measure, be-

cause the lord of the castle was known to be very miserly.

But the lord of the castle knew that all this had been done by the bluest of blue birds. This lord, being very stingy and greedy, thought he might do a fine stroke of business were he to purchase the bird.

Hence, calling Pablo away to his study, he proposed to him to purchase the bird for what price he should quote.

"You would never give me my price," replied Pablo.

"For it I will give you one hundred thousand dollars," said the lord of the castle.

"It is not enough."

"Very well, I will add two hundred thousand more."

"That is still not enough," cried Pablo.

"I will make it one million dollars then!"

"I want something else!"

"What, still more? Why, man, you must want paradise itself!"

"Not so; I want what you can give me this

very moment. I want your daughter with whom I danced just now! Let her be my bride in addition to the million dollars. The million will keep us nicely."

"What! my daughter!" cried the old miser with very great joy. "By my faith, we shall soon conclude the bargain. Why did you not say so before? We shall celebrate the wedding tomorrow."

He soon found his daughter, and told her of the engagement he had made for her. But she was greatly surprised and cried out: "But what if he is a wicked elf, and all he does be witchcraft?"

"You have a chain of coral hanging from your neck. It is a sure proof against all witchery."

"And what if he be the prince of evil himself?"

"I will hang another chain of coral about your neck, and he will have no power over you," replied the old miser.

He bade her get ready for the wedding

which he had planned for the next day. He then called his treasurer and told him to count out a million dollars, and have it ready to deliver to Pablo.

"I will hang another chain of coral about your neck"

It took the treasurer and his assistants quite a little time to count out so much money. They were fortunate to have many large bills and large gold pieces. The money was finally piled in a heap on a large table. Pablo was shown the heap of money. This was about a million times as much money as he had ever seen at one time in his whole life.

But he did not show his great surprise at seeing so much money. He acted as if he were used to being rich.

Arrangements were made for him to deliver the bluest of blue birds to the lord of the castle the next day just before the wed-

ding. At that time, also, he should receive in exchange his million dollars.

Pablo had announced his name to the lord of the castle as being Sir Don Pablo, Knight of the Lucky Star. This name sounded very fine on the wedding invitations that were sent out that evening to a number of distinguished friends of the lord and lady of the castle.

The magic horse of Sir Don was carefully taken care of by the lord's groom. Sir Don himself was lodged in the most beautiful room of the castle. He took personal charge of his bluest of blue birds. He hung the cage on the bed-post. He was very careful not to let this great prize get out of his sight.

He was so happy he could not sleep that night. Said he to himself, "Did anyone ever have such luck? I can hardly believe all this is real. A million dollars tomorrow, and the most beautiful bride in the world! With a million dollars I am sure we shall never want for anything. As often as I put my hands in

my pockets there will be money at the bottom."

Morning finally came, and with it a most perfect day. All were up bright and early to get ready for the wedding which was to happen at two o'clock.

Sir Don called on the bluest of blue birds for a fine wedding suit. When he was decked out in the suit furnished, he certainly looked the part of Sir Don Pablo, Knight of the Lucky Star.

He ordered the bluest of blue birds to furnish a wedding outfit for the bride that should be the most beautiful that ever graced a bride in all the world before. The outfit furnished was of such dazzling beauty of silk and jewels, that when one beheld it he was obliged to go outside and look at the sun to rest his eyes.

It was near two o'clock. All the noted guests were assembled. A real bishop, who was to perform the ceremony, had arrived.

The time had now come for Sir Don to de-

liver the bluest of blue birds over to the lord of the castle, and receive his million dollars in return.

It had been arranged to make this exchange just before the wedding ceremony. The money was to be packed upon the back of the magic horse. Then after the ceremony Sir Don and his bride were to mount the horse and ride away.

The lord of the castle called the guests together to witness the exchange. The million dollars was carefully packed in great saddle-bags and placed on Sir Don's magic horse.

Then Sir Don took the cage containing the bluest of blue birds, and, with great politeness, delivered it into the hands of the lord of the castle.

What do you think happened?

The wedding guests were all gathered in little groups discussing the wonderful powers of the bird and all the events which had taken place.

"He was nearly struck dumb to find that it was not blue at all"

"Peace! peace!" cried the lord of the castle. "I now possess the bluest of blue birds, and I will perform more wonderful things than ever did Sir Don. Approach and see the wonders I will work with it."

This old miserly lord had made the arrangement to have this bird delivered to him just before the wedding ceremony so he could command it to furnish the wedding dinner.

He now took the cage and lifting it up to look at the bird, was nearly struck dumb to find that it was not blue at all, but was a large gray owl. It turned and stared at the lord in a frightful manner, and gave a fierce peck at the door of the cage with its beak, and flung it open. Then it flew out of the window with a terrible screech.

The lord of the castle stood with open mouth, not knowing what to do or say. His guests broke out in peals of laughter at his confusion and well-deserved punishment for his exchanging a million dollars and his beautiful daughter for a worthless bird.

In a moment the old miser recovered enough to bethink himself of Sir Don, the magic horse, and the million dollars. The magic horse with the million dollars loaded on his back had disappeared as if it had

"Sir Don was more than a mile from the castle-grounds in five minutes"

sunk into the ground or become thin air.

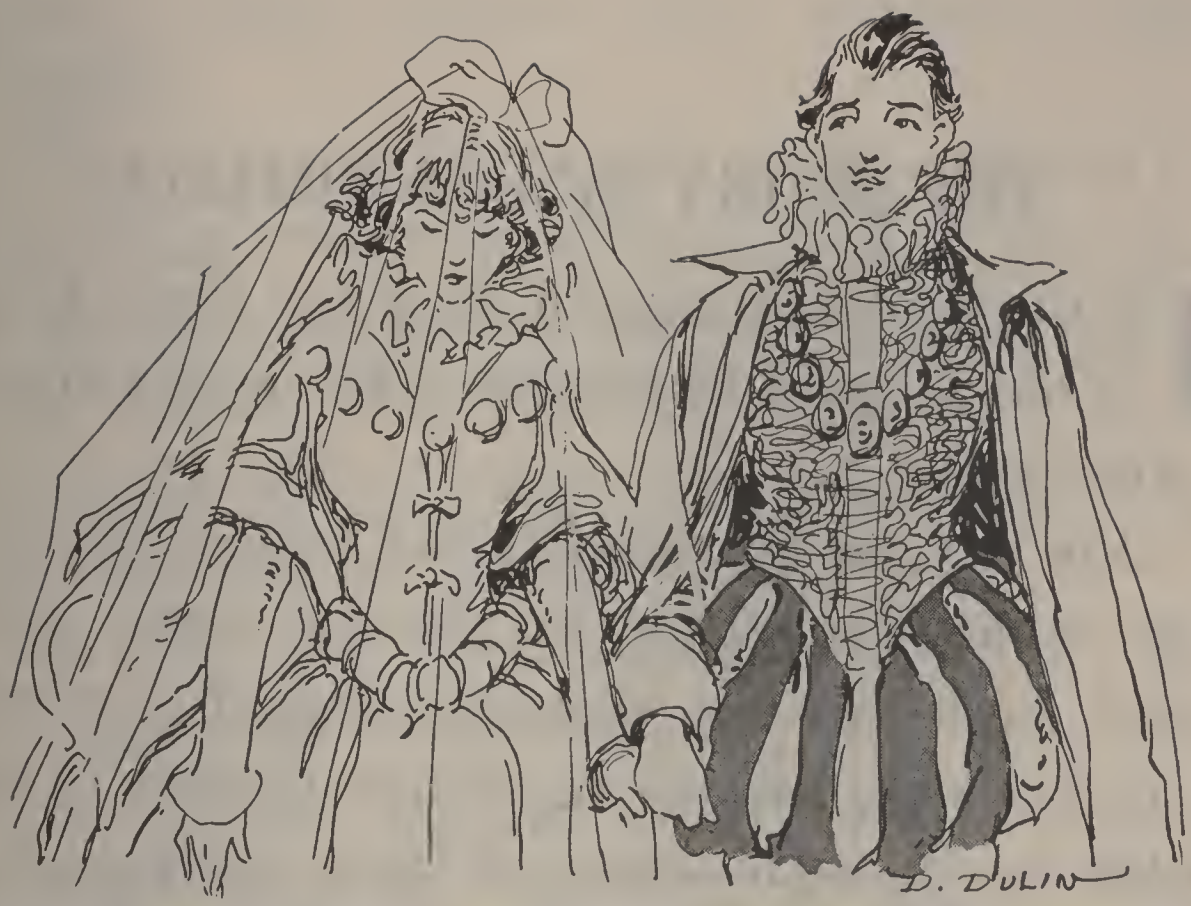
There stood Sir Don Pablo, Knight of the Lucky Star, dressed in the very same old clothes he wore before he saw the Lucky Star. He also held the same old staff in his hand. He was again Pablo, the bird-cage maker. He had not used his gift rightly and his good luck completely vanished.

The lord of the castle cried out in great anger at Pablo, calling him the prince of evil. He bade him leave his presence quickly and forever. In order to hasten him away, the lord commanded his butler and treasurer to take hazel switches and use them lively upon Sir Don.

This they did with such good effect that Sir Don was more than a mile from the castle grounds in less than five minutes.

He went back to his little tumble-down house in the little tumble-down village. He worked at the same trade in the same way, and was as poor and hungry as ever.

And was the fair and lovely daughter sorry



"She married an honest, handsome youth whom she dearly loved"

that she missed wedding Sir Don? Not at all. Her beautiful fairy wedding outfit remained with her, and she had use for it in a short time. She married an honest, handsome youth whom she dearly loved, and they lived happily forever afterwards.

THE STORY OF BRUNHILDA

IN the good old days of long ago there lived a lad, named Siegfried, who dearly loved adventure.

One day, as he stood in the forest wondering what enterprise he should start upon next, he heard the birds singing of a mountain far away, where a maiden named Brunhilda lay in an enchanted sleep, surrounded by a ring of magic flames. Here she must slumber until there should appear a man strong and brave enough to dash through the flames and waken her with a kiss.

Siegfried determined to journey to the mountain at once. So he saddled his horse, which was a strong, faithful creature, and rode away to seek the sleeping maiden.

Many days and nights he wandered, and at length, early one morning, as he ascended the highlands, he saw a rosy glow in the dis-

tance, which grew ever brighter and brighter.

"The rising sun," he said to himself, but he knew that it was not the rising sun. On and on he rode, and ever brighter and brighter grew the sky, until at length he came upon the flames themselves, and he knew that he had reached his journey's end.

As Siegfried drew nearer, he could hear the crackling of the flames, and when his horse saw the fire, the animal reared up on its hind legs, and snorted in terror. But Siegfried knew no fear. Putting spurs to his horse, he boldly forced it through the flames, and, lo! both horse and rider passed through unharmed.

Before Siegfried's eyes was a wondrous sight. On the mountain stood a castle, the strangest ever seen, for it was built entirely of green marble, as were all the buildings round it; and there, on the grassy slope before the castle, lay a young warrior, clad in shining armor, with a helmet on his head.

Siegfried went up to him, to ask him where he might find the maiden. But the warrior was sunk in slumber, and made no reply when Siegfried spoke. Siegfried shook him roughly, to waken him, but he still slept on. Then Siegfried opened the young man's visor and removed his helmet. What was his surprise to find, within, the long fair hair and rosy face of a beautiful woman!

This, then, was Brunhilda; it could be no other. Bending over her, he pressed a kiss lightly on her lips. Immediately Brunhilda awoke, and thanked the young hero for breaking the magic spell which bound her. Then, as they sat together in the marble palace, Brunhilda told her story.

She was one of Wotan's eight daughters who were called Walkyries. They were beautiful goddesses of immense size and strength, and used to follow Wotan when he went into battle. Occasionally, when two knights or two countries battled against each other, they would award the palm of victory

to one or the other. It was also their duty to carry all slain heroes to Walhalla, the beautiful palace of Wotan.

One day Brunhilda disobeyed her father's orders, and awarded the victory to the hero whom Wotan wished overthrown. Wotan was very angry, and as a punishment he forbade her to dwell among the gods and goddesses, and declared that never again should she set foot in Walhalla. Furthermore, he would cause her to wed a mortal man, thus becoming a mortal woman, instead of a goddess.

Brunhilda was overcome with grief, as were all of her sisters. They all pleaded with Wotan not to punish her in this way. But he had already pronounced sentence upon her, and could not retract his word. Then Brunhilda wept piteously, and begged him at least to grant that her husband might be a hero. This he promised, and then disclosed his plan.

He would sink her in a magic sleep, and

would order Loki, the fire-god, to kindle some magic flames, which were to encircle her. She was to slumber until awakened by a man brave enough to go through fire for her sake. "And," continued Wotan, "of course only a hero would show such courage." Then he assured her that when the hero came he should be unharmed by the ring of fire.

And so, with streaming eyes, Brunhilda bade her sisters a long farewell. Never again, so long as she lived, would she behold them. Wotan was deeply touched when he saw her grief, and with a last tender kiss upon her beautiful brow, he laid her on the grassy slope, and pronounced the magic words which bound her.

Siegfried remained for a long time with Brunhilda in the green castle. He then started for home, promising her that he would return and marry her, as soon as he had visited his parents, whom he felt he had treated very cruelly.

Brunhilda replied that she, too, thought

that he ought to visit his mother and father, but that he must promise to return as soon as he had done so. He readily promised, and sealed his pledge by placing his magic ring upon her finger. Then he set out for Niederland.

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